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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 TOKYO 000709

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TAGS: PARM PREL MNUC JA KS KN CH  
SUBJECT: JAPAN-DPRK TALKS CONCLUDE WITH ZERO SERIOUSNESS

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    1B. TOKYO 644  
    1C. BEIJING 2089

Classified By: DEPUTY CHIEF OF MISSION JOSEPH R. DONOVAN. REASONS: 1.4 (b),(d).

11. (S) SUMMARY: North Korea showed "zero seriousness" about resolving its bilateral issues with Japan during February 4-8 Japan-DPRK bilateral talks in Beijing, MOFA Asia DG Sasae told visiting CSIS Senior Advisor Robert Einhorn and Political Minister Counselor Michael Meserve on February 8. PM Koizumi remains unlikely to invoke unilateral sanctions over the abduction issue, but Japan will continue to apply its own "defensive measures," Sasae offered. Japan's normalization talks team made it clear that only a "package deal" that resolves the abduction, nuclear and missile issues would bring about normalization of relations. During their security talks, the DPRK failed to articulate a new position, while complaining about the U.S.-Japan Alliance, BMD, and U.S. defensive measures. Analyzing Kim Jong-il's January 2006 trip to China, Sasae said the North Korean leader most likely used the visit to obtain economic assistance from Beijing. Sasae expressed pessimism over prospects for the Six-Party Talks, cautioned the United States and Japan are losing leverage over the situation to China and the ROK, and urged that the U.S. Government consider engaging in direct talks with the DPRK. END SUMMARY

Outcome of Japan-DPRK Talks

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12. (S) The North Korean delegation to the February 4-8 talks with Japan had "nothing new to offer" and showed "zero seriousness" about resolving bilateral issues with Japan, MOFA Asia Director General Kenichiro Sasae told visiting CSIS Senior Advisor Robert Einhorn on February 8, 2006. Instead, Sasae said, the DPRK delegation "demanded something new" (the turnover of Japanese NGO officials reported ref tel B). Confirming that Japan's delegation would be returning to Tokyo later in the day, Sasae summed up the talks with the following comments.

13. (S) On Abductions:

-- Japan told the DPRK it may invoke unilateral sanctions if the abduction cases are not resolved. In fact, however, while the Koizumi government must "accommodate the emotions of the Japanese public" (70 percent of whom support sanctions) it does not intend to implement sanctions because

it is convinced the move would not work and would worsen the atmosphere surrounding the Six-Party Talks.

-- The Japanese government will continue to apply its own "defensive measures" in response to the abduction issue. Sasae cited implementation of the insurance requirement imposed on DPRK vessels in March 2005 and the withdrawal earlier this month of tax-exempt status of the pro-Pyongyang General Federation of Korean Residents in Japan (Chongryon).

¶4. (S) On Normalization:

-- Japan made it clear it is ready to begin normalization talks but made it equally clear it will not normalize relations until the abduction issue and its concerns about the DPRK's nuclear and missile programs are fully resolved. In the end it is a "package deal," Sasae said.

¶5. (S) On Security Issues:

-- The DPRK had "nothing new to offer" on the nuclear or missile issues and did not articulate positions on those subjects. Instead, they focused on their concerns regarding the U.S.-Japan Alliance and our effort to develop a ballistic missile defense.

-- The North Koreans also complained about defensive measures taken by the United States in the Banco Delta Asia case. Japan's response was to point out that those were law enforcement matters to be dealt with separately from the Six-Party Talks, Sasae said.

Analysis of KJI's Trip

TOKYO 00000709 002 OF 002

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¶6. (S) Asked what to make of Kim Jong-il's January 2006 trip through China, Sasae replied that while it is possible that Kim would like to follow China's path toward economic reform, it is more likely he used the visit to obtain economic assistance from Beijing. For the moment, it appears the DPRK is focusing on trade with China, South Korea and Thailand. At the same time Japan-DPRK trade figures are in sharp decline. Sasae acknowledged that China and the ROK appear to be competing for attention from the DPRK and that Pyongyang is using this competition to its advantage. What is clear is that U.S. and Japanese leverage over North Korea is decreasing, Sasae cautioned.

Plea for Direct Talks

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¶7. (S) Sasae said that "frankly speaking" he is pessimistic about prospects for the Six-Party Talks because "both sides appear to be waiting for the other to do something" and distrust is on the rise. Even if the Six-Party dialogue resumes, it "will be very difficult for both sides to please each other." Alternatively, ratcheting up pressure on the North could illicit dangerous, undesirable, or at best unclear results. While pressure from China could be most effective, Beijing appears unwilling to go that route, Sasae added. He concluded the meeting by repeating an earlier plea for the United States to engage in direct talks with the DPRK. "They won't give us anything; it is you they want to talk to. That is why I encourage your government to meet with them."

SCHIEFFER